

**Summary of the
National Database Committee Teleconference
April 29, 1998**

The National Database Committee of the National Environmental Laboratory Accreditation Conference (NELAC) met by teleconference on Wednesday, April 29, 1998, at 2:00 PM Eastern Daylight Time (EDT). The meeting was led by its acting chair, Dr. Ken Jackson of the NY State Department of Health. A list of action items is given in Attachment A. A list of participants is given in Attachment B. *The purpose of the meeting was twofold: 1) To select a chair person and 2) To chart a course for the work of the committee.*

INTRODUCTION

The mandate of the National Database committee is to advise the Board of Directors and EPA on two databases. One database is for the State accrediting authorities. This one is small and relatively easy to design.

DISCUSSION

This committee had been inactive for want of a Chair person. Dr. Kenneth Jackson served as acting chair. He invited nominations, including self nominations both by email prior to the meeting and during the meeting. No one put forth any names, so Dr. Jackson asked Mr. Matthew Caruso if he would be willing to serve. He was willing and the membership elected him with no dissenting votes. We agreed to have biweekly conference calls, at least in the period prior to the NELAC 4th Annual Meeting.

The discussion raised an important issue: namely whether a centralized database for the full NELAP program or a distributed system is needed. A centralized database would require EPA funding to develop and operate. The decentralized approach would be less costly for the Agency. NELAC would have a central node in a distributed system with only minimal information other than pointers to the state sites. Another concern was that having only a year to develop a major database may not be sufficient. The decentralized database would consist of an internet system where each state accrediting authority would maintain and update daily (or frequently) its own web site with its own database. The information could be presented on a passive web site (with frequent updates), or an interactive one, where the underlying database is also kept current.

If a distributed system, is selected two action items come immediately to mind: First, the committee would need to work with the accrediting authority committee to modify the application form for accrediting authorities to ask for information on their web sites and databases. It would have to become part of the understanding of the responsibilities of accrediting authorities that they must maintain a web site with current information. Second, the job of the database committee would become to develop standards for the web sites that contain the information.

The pro and con arguments for a distributed system include the following points:

Pro:

C **Redundancy.** If a centralized system were developed, it would be redundant as most states will keep track of their accreditation status using electronic databases anyway.

C **Savings.** EPA would not need to budget money for development and implementation of a centralized database for NELAP. A Central node of a decentralized system would be much less expensive.

Con:

C **Limited Capabilities.** Some functions couldn't be performed conveniently in a distributed system. One could not get a list of all labs in the nation accredited in a certain program area.

C **Control.** EPA would exercise control of a centralized system. Control would not be absolute, as keeping the database current depends on timely information from the states, which, in spite of standards, would be beyond EPA control.

C **Unfunded Mandates.** Most states have databases and web sites, but they may need to develop systems for linking the two. States could argue this represents an unfunded mandate. EPA could perhaps put up some development money for a model system using common commercial software.

Action items arising from this conference call: Dr. James Stemmler will develop a listing of fields needed for the preliminary database -- the one on accrediting authorities -- and email it to the committee before the next conference call. Dr. Stemmler will talk with Alan Sparks, an EPA technical expert to: a) solicit additional input regarding the options for the national database; and, b) invite him to participate in the next conference call.

SUMMARY

C Mr. Matthew Caruso was elected chair.

C The committee agreed to biweekly conference calls on Wednesday Afternoons

C The first issue to decide is whether to recommend a centralized national database or a distributed database of linked web sites

ACTION ITEMS
National Database Committee Teleconference
April 29, 1998

Item No.	Action Item	Date to be Completed
1.	Dr. James Stemmler will develop a set of fields for the accrediting authority and distribute it to the members via email prior to the next conference call	6 May 98
2.	Dr. Stemmler will get an EPA technical consultant to participate in the next conference call.	13 May 98

PARTICIPANTS
National Database Committee Teleconference
April 29, 1998

Name	Affiliation	Phone Numbers
Dr. Kenneth W. Jackson, Acting Chair	NY State Department of Health	T: 518/485-5570 F: 518/485-5568 E: jackson@wadsworth.org
Mr. Matthew Caruso, Chair	NY State Department of Health	T: 518/485-5570 F: 518/485-5568 E: caruso@wadsworth.org
Mr. Stephen Arms	FL Department of Health	T: 904/971-1502 F: 904/971-1591 E: steve_arms@doh.state.fl.us
Ms. Mary Ann Baumgart	MN Valley Testing Laboratories	T: 507/354-8517 F: 507/359-2890 E: gaumvlt@newulmtel.net
Ms. Jeri Long	IL EPA, Division of Laboratories	T: 217/524-1392 F: 217/524-0944 E: epa611@epa.state.il.us
Mr. Nicholas P. Macelletti, Jr	CT Dept of Public Health	T: 860/509-7368 F: 860/509-7295 E: mace101@wonder.em.cdc.gov
Dr. James T. Stemmler	USEPA/ORD	T: 202/564-6878 F: 202/565-2441 E: stemmler.james@epamail.epa.gov
Mr. Allen C. Tupy	MN Dept of Health, Lab Support Services	T: 612/623-5680 F: 612/623-5514 E: allen.tupy@health.state.mn.us